

State of California
BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
SALES AND USE TAX REGULATIONS

Regulation 1655. RETURNS, DEFECTS AND REPLACEMENTS

References: Sections 6006-6012, Revenue and Taxation Code; Sections 1793.2-1793.25, Civil Code; Section 11713.12, Vehicle Code.
Barter, Exchange, Trade-Ins, see Regulation 1654.
Auction Sales, agreement not to deliver property or to return amount paid, see Regulation 1565.

(a) RETURNED MERCHANDISE.

The amount upon which tax is computed does not include the amount charged for merchandise returned by customers if, (1) the full sale price, including that portion designated as "sales tax", is refunded either in cash or credit and (2) the customer, in order to obtain the refund or credit, is not required to purchase other property at a price greater than the amount charged for the property that is returned. Refund or credit of the entire amount is deemed to be given when the purchase price, less rehandling and restocking costs, is refunded or credited to the customer. The amount withheld for rehandling and restocking may not exceed the actual cost of rehandling and restocking the returned merchandise. However, in lieu of using the actual cost for each transaction, the amount withheld for rehandling and restocking may be a percentage of the sales price determined by the average cost of rehandling and restocking returned merchandise during the previous accounting cycle (generally one year). If the seller elects to withhold rehandling and restocking amounts based on a percentage of sales price, the seller is bound by that election for the entire accounting cycle for which the election is made and must apply that percentage in lieu of actual cost during that period on all returned merchandise transactions for which rehandling and restocking costs are withheld. The amount withheld as rehandling and restocking costs may not include compensation for increased overhead costs because of the return, for refinishing or restoring the property to salable condition where the necessity therefor is occasioned by customer usage, or for any expense prior to the "sale" (i.e., transfer of title, lease, or possession under a conditional sale contract).

Sellers must maintain adequate records which may be verified by audit, documenting the percentage used.

(b) DEFECTIVE MERCHANDISE.

(1) **IN GENERAL.** Amounts credited or refunded by sellers to consumers on account of defects in merchandise sold may be excluded from the amount on which tax is computed. If, however, defective merchandise is accepted as part payment for other merchandise and an additional allowance or credit is given on account of its defective condition, only the amount allowed or credited on account of defects may be excluded from taxable gross receipts. The amount allowed as the "trade-in" value must be included in the measure of tax.

(2) **RESTITUTION OR REPLACEMENT UNDER CALIFORNIA LEMON LAW.**

(A) General. Under subdivision (d) of Civil Code section 1793.2, if a manufacturer is unable to service or repair a "new motor vehicle," as that term is defined in subdivision (e)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.22, to conform to the applicable express warranties after a reasonable number of attempts, the manufacturer must either replace the motor vehicle or provide the buyer restitution of the purchase price, less specified amounts, at the buyer's election.

(B) Restitution. A manufacturer who pays a buyer restitution pursuant to, and in complete compliance with, subdivision (d)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.2 is entitled to a refund of the amount of sales tax or sales tax reimbursement included in the restitution paid by the manufacturer to the buyer. The manufacturer may file a claim for refund of that amount with the Board. The claim must include a statement that the claim is submitted in accordance with the provisions of section 1793.25 of the Civil Code. The manufacturer must submit with the claim documents evidencing that restitution was made pursuant to, and in complete compliance with, subdivision (d)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.2 including: a copy of the original sales agreement between the buyer and the dealer of the non-conforming motor vehicle; copies of documents showing all deductions made in calculating the amount of restitution paid to the buyer along with full explanations for those deductions, including settlement documents and odometer statements; a copy of the title branded "Lemon Law Buyback" for the non-conforming motor vehicle returned by the buyer; and proof that the decal the manufacturer is required to affix to that motor vehicle has been so affixed in accordance with section 11713.12 of the Vehicle Code. The manufacturer must also submit with the claim the seller's

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permit number of the dealer who made the retail sale of the non-conforming motor vehicle to the buyer, and evidence that the dealer had reported and paid sales tax on the gross receipts from that sale. For purposes of this regulation, the number of attempts made to repair the non-conforming motor vehicle, if any, prior to providing the customer restitution is not relevant for purposes of determining whether restitution has been made pursuant to subdivision (d)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.2.

(C) Replacement. For purposes of this regulation, a manufacturer who, pursuant to subdivision (d)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.2, replaces a non-conforming motor vehicle with a new motor vehicle substantially identical to the motor vehicle replaced is replacing the motor vehicle under the terms of the mandatory warranty. No additional tax is due unless the buyer is required to pay an additional amount to receive the replacement motor vehicle, in which case tax is due measured by the amount of that payment. If an amount is refunded to the customer as part of the exchange of the non-conforming motor vehicle for the replacement motor vehicle, then that amount is regarded as restitution for purposes of this regulation if it satisfies the requirements of subdivision (d)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.2. The manufacturer may file a claim for refund under subdivision (b)(2)(B) of this regulation for the amount of sales tax or sales tax reimbursement that is included in the amount of that restitution paid by the manufacturer to the buyer. For purposes of this regulation, the number of attempts made to repair the non-conforming motor vehicle, if any, prior to providing the customer a replacement is not relevant for purposes of determining whether the replacement has been made pursuant to subdivision (d)(2) of Civil Code section 1793.2.

(c) REPLACEMENT PARTS — WARRANTIES.

(1) IN GENERAL — DEFINITIONS.

“Mandatory Warranty.” A warranty is mandatory within the meaning of this regulation when the buyer, as a condition of the sale, is required to purchase the warranty or guaranty contract from the seller. “Optional Warranty.” A warranty is optional within the meaning of this regulation when the buyer is not required to purchase the warranty or guaranty contract from the seller, i.e., the buyer is free to contract with anyone he or she chooses.

(2) MANDATORY WARRANTIES.

The sale of tangible personal property includes the furnishing, pursuant to the guaranty provisions of the contract of sale, or mandatory warranty, of replacement parts or materials, and if the property subject to the warranty is sold at retail, the measure of the tax includes any amount charged for the guaranty or warranty, whether or not separately stated. The sale of the replacement parts and materials to the seller furnishing them thereunder is a sale for resale and not taxable.

(3) OPTIONAL WARRANTIES.

The person obligated under an optional warranty contract to furnish parts, materials, and labor necessary to maintain the property is the consumer of the materials and parts furnished and tax applies to the sale of such items to that person. If he or she purchased the property for resale or from outside California, without tax paid on the purchase price, he or she must report and pay tax upon the cost of such property to him or her when he or she appropriates it to the fulfillment of the contract of warranty.

(4) DEDUCTIBLES.

A deductible paid by a customer under the terms of a mandatory or optional warranty contract is subject to tax measured by the amount of the deductible allocable to the sale of tangible personal property to the customer. For example, if the itemized sales price of tangible personal property (or the fair retail value if not separately itemized) provided pursuant to a warranty is 50 percent of the total fair retail value of the repairs and the deductible is \$100, 50 percent of that deductible, \$50, would be allocable to the sale of tangible personal property and would be subject to tax, whether the warranty were optional or mandatory. Unless otherwise stated in the warranty contract, when either an optional or a mandatory warranty provides that the customer will pay a deductible towards repairs and services provided under the warranty, the person providing the warranty contract is liable for any tax or tax reimbursement otherwise payable by the customer with respect to that deductible.

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History: Adopted August 7, 1957, as restatement of previous Ruling 64 (Cal. Admin. Code 2054), effective September 11, 1957.
Effective August 1, 1933 (Rulings 66 and 67, Cal. Admin. Codes 2056 and 2057).
Adopted as of January 1, 1945, as a restatement of previous rulings.
Adopted November 3, 1969, as a restatement of former Rulings 64 (Cal. Admin. Code 2054); 66 (Cal. Admin. Code 2056) and 67 (Cal. Admin. Code 2057), effective December 5, 1969.
Amended November 5, 1970, effective December 10, 1970.
Amended October 31, 1984, effective December 30, 1984.
First paragraph of (a) revised to provide for withholding of rehandling and restocking costs on basis of average costs and to require retention of adequate records.
Amended November 1, 2000, effective January 18, 2001. Subdivision (b) – current language re-designated (b)(1) and entitled “IN GENERAL.”
New subdivision (b)(2) added. Subdivision (c)(3) – gender specific language deleted and the phrase “or from outside California” added. New subdivision (c)(4) added.

Regulations are issued by the State Board of Equalization to implement, interpret or make specific provisions of the California Sales and Use Tax Law and to aid in the administration and enforcement of that law. If you are in doubt about how the Sales and Use Tax Law applies to your specific activity or transaction, you should write the nearest State Board of Equalization office. Requests for advice regarding a specific activity or transaction should be in writing and should fully describe the facts and circumstances of the activity or transaction.